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M E D I A

TRUTH VERSUS LIES
by Theodore John Kaczynski
Context Books, May/June 1999

Ted: Bonnie was kind enough
to read this description for
potential legal problems.

Truth versus lies will be
announced via the Internet,
probably www.msnbc.com,
on Thursday Feb. 11.

-B.

TRUTH VERSUS LIES is a memoir—of sorts. It is also an attempt to tell the other side of a one-sided tale that was spun by his family, and his attorneys, in their attempt to save him from the death penalty.

On January 22, 1998, Theodore John Kaczynski, Montana recluse and accused Unabomber, entered an unconditional plea of guilt in exchange for three life sentences after a dramatic behind-the-scenes legal struggle, which he now seeks to appeal. Among the many inaccurate reports to surface from the media frenzy that came to be known as “Club Ted,” was a speculative article claiming that Kaczynski had written a second manifesto. He had not. But he was writing, and taking scrupulous notes, in an effort to refute the canted stories about his life and character that riddled every newspaper in the nation.

Theodore Kaczynski’s engaging prose recasts his life story in the wake of family members and attorneys who portrayed him as a raving lunatic. TRUTH VERSUS LIES sets the record straight. Kaczynski has said that he would have preferred death to a mental illness defense, the unstated implication being that it would have ridiculed his life, and—more seriously—would have invalidated his activism.

Kaczynski’s undergraduate years at Harvard are vividly brought back to life by a lively account of his studies during the 50s. With glints of deadpan storytelling, it is hard not to be fascinated by dint of nostalgia, the moments of rather disarming comic relief, and for the deftness with which he quashes the gossip of his many chroniclers.

The Cain and Abel aspect offered here is perhaps of the greatest interest. Kaczynski is earnest about discovering his brother’s true motivations for turning him over to the FBI. The family tales are painful, and some of his adventures will make the reader uncomfortable—Kaczynski spares no details, even when they show him in a less than favorable light. But still, there is a wry sense of humor woven throughout, a Tiresias-like quest for the truth, and of course the chance to witness a penetrating intellect at work.

TRUTH VERSUS LIES is undeniably the first book of its kind.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA V. THEODORE JOHN KACZYNSKI:
Ethics, Power, and the Invention of the Unabomber
by Michael Mello
Context Books, May 1999

On January 22, 1998, Theodore John Kaczynski, Montana recluse and accused Unabomber, entered an unconditional plea of guilt in exchange for three life sentences after a dramatic behind-the-scenes legal struggle. There were conflicting reports in the press: Kaczynski was an insidious sociopath; a mentally incompetent paranoid schizophrenic; hero of environmentalism; Machiavellian genius. One thing was clear: Kaczynski did not get his day in court. And it all begged a very simple question: Why?

During pre-trial proceedings, Michael Mello became an informal advisor to Theodore Kaczynski's defense with regard to the prosecution's questionable use of private journals as evidence in a capital trial. As the case unfolded, the questions kept piling up.

As a former defense attorney for the likes of Ted Bundy and "Crazy" Joe Spaziano, Michael Mello has a reputation for asking tough questions. Writing about his previous book *Dead Wrong*, THE NATION praised Mello for having "no illusions to fog his vision of the legal machinery." KIRKUS REVIEW touted Mello's style as "authoritative," and PUBLISHERS WEEKLY noted that "far from romanticizing the defendants or their crimes, Mello keeps the focus on the system."

In THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA v. THEODORE JOHN KACZYNSKI, Mello is in rare form, taking a close look at the manner in which the Unabomber got lost in a system that could not accommodate him, because it could not imagine him.

Following news stories, court transcripts, and taking spirited digressions to flesh out the scene, Mello masterfully retraces the events that led to Kaczynski's guilty plea. This is certainly Mello at his best, sidestepping the expected to expose the conflicts of interest and ideological underpinnings that led to the Unabomber non-trial. Mello finds a parallel in John Brown, who was put to death for the raid on Harper's Ferry, and lit the fuse of the Civil War. Brown got his day in court; and the result was the abolition of slavery. More than a century later, our courts willingly allowed a political criminal to be censored. What would have happened to environmentalism were Kaczynski to have had his day in court?

Mello passionately raises questions that cast both the trial and our understanding of the Unabomber in an altogether different light.



As more and more book publishers merge with giant conglomerates and small presses slide into oblivion, the great works of literature fall along the wayside. To compound this situation, many noteworthy non-fiction titles with great potential go unpublished, or they get lost in the “dark wood” of university publishing. This is largely due to the unwieldy overhead associated with making a book earn out in the current corporate publishing model (i.e., sell enough copies to recoup the cost of unruly advances and a bloated management). It most certainly is not a reflection of the closing of the American mind, or any other such nonsense. It is merely the reflection of a business model that has eclipsed itself and forgotten that a book should nurture us, and expand our understanding of the world around us. Looking at a torso of Apollo, Rilke wrote (to himself): “You must change your life.” The epiphany is also the child of great books.

Context Books is a new publishing venture with a mandate: Bring the gems of non-fiction and literature from around the world, both old and new, to American readers. The market for world literature—whether fiction, poetry, or drama—has enormous potential. And it has been a long time since this potential was tapped. The last programs in the States that were dedicated to the fascinating intricacies of world literature, Grove Press and New Directions, dropped the torch a long time ago. It is time for the culture marathon to continue.

Context Books will only publish challenging, culturally significant books. No pulp. Non-fiction should give rise to discussion and dissent; a good history or memoir will have relevance for years to come. Good non-fiction, contrary to current publishing mores, should not have the same shelf life as a cup of yogurt.

As international borders shift and challenges of the twenty-first century give rise to a sea of new knowledge and ideas, obstacles and opportunities, **Context Books** will be there on the crest of that sea change.

Beau Friedlander, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief, was educated at Bennington College, Oxford University, and Columbia University. He left academia in 1995 with a headache and a Master’s degree in English and Scandinavian literature. A year later, after a brief stint at Alfred A. Knopf, Friedlander established Context Media, which was essentially a packaging company that specialized in the preparation of domestic publications for foreign markets, and vice versa. The idea was simple: raise enough capital to support a small publishing press. During the first year, Context Media prospered and found its niche preparing language courses, direct-mail wildlife encyclopedias, and cookbooks. Friedlander continues to direct Context Media and is also the Senior Editor of *aRUDE Magazine*. In addition to his work in publishing, Friedlander is a poet and art critic. He has written for artist catalogs and published both poems and translations in various magazines, as well as an anthology edited by Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney.